

**Public Comments Received – NOVA Parks Lease at Cameron Run Regional Park
For P&RC Public Hearing – June 23, 2016**

6/14/16	Gina Baum Via email:	<p>Dear Mayor Silverberg and Council,</p> <p>I am writing regarding the lease negotiation process for the 32 acres of land located at Cameron Run. To say I am disappointed is an understatement. To me what took place here is quite clearly misconduct likely both ethical and statutory.</p> <p>A proposal was made to the Parks and Rec Commission last Fall (the same one being considered tonight) and given the response it received from Commissioners, the Commission was told the proposal was withdrawn.</p> <p>In fact nothing of the sort occurred. Instead City Staff and Council embarked on a “year long endeavor” (See attachment 3 in the Council Packet) intentionally excluding the Parks and Recreation Commission, nearby Civic Associations and the Public at large.</p> <p>According to the City of Alexandria Real Estate Disposition Policy Section 1 “the City Manager shall develop appropriate mechanism for public input and participation...to dispose of real estate...shall include consultation with civic association(s),” None of this has taken place. Besides the obvious intentional exclusion of a public process, there are several other questions to be answered regarding the City’s costs and value of its relationship with NOVA Parks.</p> <p>1) NOVA PARKS manages Carlyle House at a \$200,000 loss a year. Why? It’s a beautiful property for events and should easily be profitable.</p> <p>2) They make over \$700,000 in revenue from Cameron Run and under this agreement we get no monetary funds what so ever. Instead, the City is given 2,000 day passes a season usable Mon-Fri (a monetary value at most of \$29,000) that a City employee will have to administer.</p> <p>3) The City of Alexandria pays over \$350,000 a year to be a member of NOVA Parks for minimal discounts at NOVA Parks. (At Cameron Run it’s a quarter)</p> <p>Make no mistake, this is essentially the City of Alexandria’s money. And given the significant amount of money the City allows NOVA Parks to steward, there should be some City review process to ensure these properties and money are wisely being managed. Further, I am not sure why we would embark on buying another losing proposition in 517 Prince Street. Clearly, it will lose more than the Carlyle House. It will lose significantly more money as there is no usable event space. The Parks and Rec Department has been asked to do more with less. Job vacancy go unfilled, recreation hours are cut/limited and services are at a bare bone minimum. Meanwhile, this fiscal irresponsibility allowed to continue with no checks or balances.</p> <p>I don’t see how the City can justify a free 20 year lease on a 32 acre parcel with no monetary funds being exchanged and no separation clause included. This is a valuable, centrally located parcel and given the success of the Saint James proposal (building a \$60 million Sports Complex) in Springfield, there are likely to be opportunities that arise for far better uses of this land than a waterpark open four months out of the year.</p> <p>In closing, I propose the City include an option/clause to reclaim the land after 10 years into the lease, which could be exercised in the month of October, for years 11-30 of the lease. And in doing so the City would have to pay the remaining balance of the mortgage on 517 Prince St. Many thanks. Gina Baum</p>
6/14/17	Jeff Newhouse Via Email:	<p>Please do not authorize the City Manager to execute a twenty-year lease with NOVA Parks for the use of Cameron Run Regional Park (File #: 14-5349). This site has enormous potential to provide YEAR-ROUND recreational opportunities for Alexandria residents. We are deficient in open space and we are deficient in rectangular athletic fields. The city's youth sports organizations are very eager to discuss potential public-private partnerships to enable the proper development of Cameron Run into a much-needed athletic facility. This issue is in need of more planning, research, and public input. The reasons put forth for the need of urgent approval are spurious at best.</p>

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6/14/16	Thomas Park Via Email:	<p>I write regarding your consideration of a proposed lease agreement relating to Cameron Run Regional Park. I am the Executive Director of Alexandria Soccer Association which is the one of the cities largest youth serving non-profits with over 6,000 kids and 8,000 parents engaged with programming each year. In addition I have been active on the Youth Sports Advisory Board (under the Park and Recreation Commission) for the City for nearly five years. Like many of the committee volunteers who have reached out to you comments on this issue however, are my own. Given the extremely short time between the publication of the documents and your consideration of the item, the YSAB and ASA boards did not have time to prepare for a conversation on the issue and therefore do not have an official position. Each season Alexandria Soccer reaches thousands of community members from across our diverse city. As a highlight this year ASA will support nearly 1,250 free lunch youth with over \$175,000 in scholarship assistance. A city run program would likely force the city to make a choice whether or not they could subsidize the highest needkids. They would also have to charge more for the core experiences almost certainly ensuring fewer kids participate. ASA's annual expenses are in excess of 2.1 million dollars to support nearly 6,000 kids in numerous high quality programs that run year round. These expenses are closely managed and monitored. To operate a soccer program internally the cost to the city would be significantly higher (some projections are over 4 million dollars) and programming would likely would be much less comprehensive at the same time. A significant portion of ASA's revenue comes from donations, grants and community partners that the city currently is not able to solicit. ASA by many accounts saves the city over 3 million dollars in expenses annually. Many of you may not be aware but due to the growth of ASA the city actually yields revenues of over \$125,000 annually in city field and gym rental fees from the club. I mention this for several reasons.</p> <p>We are nearing a crisis with regards to facility capacity to support the extremely popular, community engaging and ever important year round programming both indoor and outdoor. Our population keeps growing and the need to get the most use possible out of each parcel will only continue to grow. ASA along with other affiliates are constantly battling and advocating for usable recreation space to deliver structured and free play programming to residents. We at ASA have been working with RPCA to get creative with the small parks installing futsal courts in neighborhoods most in need. Despite our best efforts we have yet to generate a viable solution long term to address the need for indoor space and a high capacity stadium venue at a large park to complement to TC Williams HS stadium which we currently have NO access to. Lights on all turf fields is a start and should be a city prerequisite to even justify an investment in turf. Though on top of the lights push the city by 2022, when the Nova lease ends, will need a much more comprehensive plan than the ones that have been proposed to address the long term needs. Should we have to cut off the number of registrations due to lack of facility support we would be failing the community and run the risk of youth not having social outlets and healthy lifestyle programming. The health and safety consequences to the city could cost us much more in gang prevention, policing, healthcare and out of school program support. The proposed Cameron Run lease ties up 25.8 acres of city parkland for a short seasonal use in exchange for the purchase of a house in another district and 2000 one-use passes to the water park valued at just \$27,000. It offers no benefit to city residents who live in the area and requires no improvements to the property that could...</p>
6/16/16	Marilyn Stegman Via Email:	<p>Mr. Browand,</p> <p>I am unable to attend the public meeting re: the Lease Agreement between the City of Alexandria and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) for Cameron Run Regional Park scheduled for Thursday, June 23, 2016, 7 p.m., at the Charles Houston Community Center.</p> <p>I have serious concerns about overcrowding in the Wave Pool at Cameron Run. I was there</p>

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6/17/16	Alexandra Bradley C.C.C. Request #99406	<p>Good Morning,</p> <p>As a resident of Townes of Cameron Parke, I'd like to comment on the Great Waves Water Park. I understand they are negotiating a renewal of the lease for an additional 20 years. For the most part they are an acceptable neighbor, but I am concerned about a few things:</p> <p>--care of trees and greenspace. They do not seem capable of caring for or to care about trees and plants. It is the public's expectation the park service can do this and do it well. The number of dead and dying trees is overwhelming. I would encourage the council to add a greenspace clause to the lease at a minimum, to include care of existing and addition of new plants and trees. --the park seems to be a cash cow for NVRPA, is there investment in it beyond how to bring in more users? I question the benefit to the city. Having been to other parks in the system, Great Waves is not up to standard. How is the city ensuring residents benefit from the park? -</p> <p>-I understand the park service wants to tie the lease to the purchase of a privately owned historic property in Old Town. I think this is unacceptable, they need to pursue purchase independently of the lease, they are 2 clear and unrelated transactions. Further, I don't see how the purchase of private property benefits the city, we need to stay out of it. --as I understand it, the park service wants to expand the park and increase the visitor count. What is the plan for parking, crowd control, litter and greenspace maintenance, and crime prevention? They already run out of parking regularly, resulting in visitors parking illegally, the trash blowing around after each weekend is unbelievable and the stress on poorly maintained spaces is high.--during construction of the playground within the park, I called the contact number to speak about damage to trees and surrounding areas, it took 3 calls to get a person and then I was essentially told to "pound sand", is this the relationship we want with the park? I feel like this issue was not well publicized, especially to residents nearby and now it seems to be a "done deal". I would encourage council to better engage residents, especially those in the Eisenhower Valley and West End, we often feel like after thoughts. If at all possible, I think a decision should be delayed so more thought can be given to how the park functions as a part of the city and a better neighbor.</p> <p>Many Thanks, Alexandra Bradley 3856 Dominion Mill Drive Alexandria, VA 22304</p>
6/17/16	Casey Kane C.C. C. Request # 99472	<p>My name is Casey Kane, I live on the West End of Alexandria. I am a member of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and a recently selected member of the Traffic and Parking Board. Today, I am writing as a local resident.</p> <p>Normally, I think the City does a very good job of getting citizen input before making a decision. With the pending lease agreement with NOVA Parks for the Cameron Run Regional Park that seems to not have been the case.</p> <p>In January 2015, the Park and Recreation Commission provided a presentation on the "Cameron Run Area Coordinated Park and Open Space Plan". Within that presentation, key plan elements included - nature trail connections, protection of natural area and passive use</p>

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		<p>recreation areas, and improved access to Lake Cook. Nowhere in the presentation did it discuss adding a house in Old Town. While I am interested in history, I also am interested in preserving our natural resources and providing citizens, access to those resources.</p> <p>If indeed, a decision is made to extend the lease with NOVA Parks, I would ask that instead of getting a historic house, we should be asking for improvements within the area of the Cameron Run Regional Park. Some of my suggestions would include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - walking trails within the Cameron Run Area - a pedestrian bridge across Cameron Run and the railroad tracks connecting Cameron Station and Eisenhower Avenue - improving Holmes Run Trail, especially around the Metro and railroad tracks - providing services at the pool to include swimming classes - adding amenities that would allow the use of the Cameron Run Regional Park for a longer period in the year - providing seasonal Bikeshare stations at the park <p>I urge you to consider seeking benefits that will improve the Cameron Run area ahead of preserving a home in Old Town.</p> <p>Thank you, Casey Kane</p>
6/15/16	Michael Peter Via Email:	<p>Dear Mayor Silberbeg, Vice Mayor Wilson, and Members of Council:</p> <p>I am writing to you today in regard to the proposed Cameron Run Regional Park lease agreement with Northern Virginia Regional parks (NOVA Parks). I am recently appointed to the Parks and Recreation Commission and, as such, expected that such a major lease agreement would have come first to the Commission for review before showing up on the City Council docket. Thanks to Vice Mayor Wilson, we will at least have a hastily arranged public hearing on the matter this Saturday.</p> <p>Unfortunately, this process does not allow for a full vetting and serious discussion that the topic deserves. Since we have not had the opportunity to review this as a Commission, I am writing to you now to express my sincere concern over the agreement as it stands. The city is potentially locking up a significant public resource with no review of additional terms or uses and tying the lease renewal to unrelated efforts in the city.</p> <p>As I understand from previous meeting minutes, the Parks and Recreation Commission raised concerns over what was then a proposed 40 year lease extension for this project. From there, the Commission was advised that negotiations over a shorter lease term were not productive. Further, there was some talk that lease extension might be tied to the Prince Street historic property. That too, seemed to be a dead end. Our Commission Chair, Jennifer Atkins was recently notified by the city manager that conversations with NOVA Parks had recently re-commenced and, suddenly, the new lease appears on the docket. This process all but guaranteed no thorough public discourse or commission consideration. Twenty years is a major commitment of both resources from NOVA Parks and open space from the city. The weight of this commitment of resources was taken seriously by NOVA Parks, but the city did not seem to view it in the same way.</p> <p>I have been to the water park with my family and have enjoyed the facility. At the same time, there is much more that could be done with the park. Since the initial</p>

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6/18/16	Micheline Eyraud C.C.C. Request #99526	<p>I just finished reading an article in today's Post on the Eisenhower Ave Water Park giveaway. Seriously, what else is the city giving away anyway? I would suggest that the city review all of the agreements that have been in force for more than twenty years without a change in terms and bring these contractual relationships into the 21st century where for most people money is not without limits. For a start, why is the city giving the land for the water rent free and then paying them \$4.60 for each resident regardless of whether or not they actually use the facility? I propose that we charge them market rent and then provide vouchers free of charge to people who actually need that assistance rather than paying assuming that every resident from the ages of 1 - whatever will benefit from the use of that facility? The city has no problem whatsoever charging people who pay taxes for special services so why don't you expand the revenue base by charging everybody market rates for assets that are owned by the city. And why doesn't the city just buy the house on Prince Street and operate it yourself? If it is financially stable it would be a good source of revenue and since you have money for additional appropriations it is clear that the city can do that with no problem.</p>
6/20/16	Barbara Rowan Via Email:	<p>Alexandria needs additional swimming facilities. Rather than close down this wave pool for nine months of the year, how about building a solar heated cover which would allow swimming all year long, save perhaps, in very snowy weather? It does not have to be a wave pool. In fact, you would probably avoid dangerous conditions, subjecting the City to possible liability if it were simply a swimming facility. I think you already have change</p>

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		<p>facilities. If not they could be built, also with solar heat, at much less cost than an entirely new swim facility. You could close off the towers and slides for the winter season. This pool could be maintained as a membership or paid facility at certain hours of the day and evening to offset the costs of maintenance and to allow difference groups to have access as different hours: seniors in the morning and late evening, students in the afternoon hours after school and general lane users whenever you feel appropriate.</p> <p>I appreciate your consideration. Barbara Rowan</p>
6/21./16	James Williams Via Email:	<p>Subject: Murray's Livery</p> <p>Dear Mr. Browand,</p> <p>I think I must have misunderstood the proposal: NOVAPARKS wants a loan to improve the water park and other things. If the loan is acquired, NP then spends \$1.5 mil on a property which would require an enormous initial restoration, expensive constant upkeep, a lifetime occupancy for the current resident, no real plans for its use; and since there is nothing left of the livery, the only truly unusual feature is an eight-hole out-house. Maybe NP should take a “pass” on this one. Jim Williams</p>
6/23/16	Agnes Artemel Via Letter:	<p>Letter to Parks and Recreation Commission City of Alexandria, Virginia Re: Cameron Run Regional Park Lease</p> <p>Dear Commissioners:</p> <p>I am writing on behalf of the Directors of the Eisenhower Partnership, although our Board has not had a chance to take a formal vote on the lease extension at Cameron Run Regional Park since we have not had a Board meeting since this item surfaced.</p> <p>The land of Cameron Run Regional Park is a significant asset of the City of Alexandria and Alexandria taxpayers. In its current use, the property provides a water park, mini-golf course and batting cages, but it could be so much more. Alexandria has many identified needs for sport and recreational facilities that could be satisfied on this piece of land. Further, it is disappointing that this property is only used for the warm months of the year, when there is a need for year-round facilities.</p> <p>The Eisenhower Partnership’s internal discussions indicate much support for a study of the highest and best use of this property for recreation that goes toward meeting the needs of our citizens. Now that a new Eisenhower West Small Area Plan has been adopted, and we anticipate the eventual redevelopment of properties on Eisenhower Avenue with residential and mixed uses, the demand for year-round indoor and outdoor recreational facilities can only increase in the future.</p> <p>Therefore, we feel that until a valid study of alternative uses and costs and benefits can be carried out it is premature to extend the lease with the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority in a way that ties up the property for 20 years or more. Although we have not had the opportunity to study the lease details, we feel it is unwise to tie together the Cameron Run Regional Park with a totally unrelated property on Prince Street.</p> <p>We request that the City take a few months to better consider the recreational needs of Alexandria citizens that might be met at the Cameron Run Regional Park site, and whether those needs can best be met through an extended lease with NVRPA or through a different contractual arrangement.</p> <p>Regards, Agnès Artemel</p>

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6/23/16	Thomas Stimson Via Email:	<p>Mr. Browand,</p> <p>I write to urge the Park and Recreation Commission to oppose the proposed lease extension with NVRPA for the Cameron Run site.</p> <p>Our city has a real shortage of year-round recreation space, and the land at the Cameron Run site is one of the few open spaces left in the city for development of such space. I believe that current wave park at that location under-utilizes that land in that it is only available for use for a few months per year, not year round. In addition, as the NVRPA acknowledged last weekend at the City Counsel public hearing, the vast majority of the wave park's users (70%) come from outside the city of Alexandria. I believe that the citizens of our city would be better served by converting the Cameron Run land to a mixed-use indoor/outdoor sports and recreation facility that would include indoor and outdoor sports fields and courts, as well as potentially an indoor year-round use pool.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Best regards,</p> <p>Tom Stimson Alexandria VA 22302</p>
6/23/16	NVCT Letter	See Attached Letter

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June 23, 2016

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Park and Recreation Commission

Dear Park and Recreation Commission Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding protection of the natural resources at Cameron Run Regional Park. The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust believes that protecting tree canopy, riparian buffers, waterways, and other natural features is critical to ensuring that our communities are healthy and viable. NVCT suggests the City undertake the following steps to thoroughly evaluate and preserve the natural resources at Cameron Run Regional Park.

NVCT recommends that the City complete a Baseline Documentation Report for the Cameron Run Regional Park property. This report should document the current conditions of the park and highlight the natural features using maps, photos, and a detailed narrative. Additionally, NVCT recommends the City prepare a Natural Resource Management Plan for the park. The plan should address care and upkeep of the lake and tree canopy, invasive plant removal, as well as management of other natural features. The Trust would be happy to prepare these reports for the City and/or provide examples.

NVCT also recommends that, if they have not already been asked, City Stormwater Management staff consult on this project regarding the impacts of the park on Cameron Run. They may be able to suggest mitigation efforts for negative impacts and enhancement tactics for the positive effects of the park on Cameron Run.

Lastly, NVCT suggests that the City consider placing a conservation easement on Cameron Run Regional Park. A conservation easement could conserve the natural features of the park while restricting further development and potentially limiting future damage to Cameron Run. The Trust would be happy to explore this option with the City. Permanent conservation of the park would expand on the continued interest of the City and NVCT to preserve the 14-acre Clermont Cove property, which is called out in the City's Open Space Plan and is within one mile of the park. Together, these properties would total nearly 40 acres of conserved land along Cameron Run.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of the natural resource value of Cameron Run Regional Park.

Sincerely,


Peggy Stevens
Executive Director

